

**DYNAMIC CELL CDMA CODE ASSIGNMENT SYSTEM
AND METHOD**

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Technical Field

The present invention relates generally to communications systems, and more particularly, to a code division multiple access system particularly suitable for mobile applications.

Background Art

In this communication age, content providers are increasingly
5 investigating ways in which to provide more content to users as well as interfacing with users.

Communication satellites have become commonplace for use in
many types of communication services, e.g., data transfer, voice
communications, television spot beam coverage, and other data transfer
10 applications. As such, satellites transmit and receive large amounts of signals used in either a "bent pipe" or "spot array" configuration to transmit signals to desired geographic locations on the earth.

Because the frequency resources are scarce for over-the-air
transmission, various encoding schemes are used to provide a greater number of
15 communication signals within an allocated communication band. Such encoding schemes include code division multiple access (CDMA), time division multiple access (TDMA), frequency division multiple access (FDMA), or combination of these schemes. Further, to prevent interference the schemes may operate at various frequencies.

20 CDMA systems are commonly used in mobile applications. In the mobile applications a plurality of base stations are positioned to provide coverage for a cell of a service area. Each of the base stations has a plurality of orthogonal codes that are used in each base station. The same group of orthogonal codes are reused in a cell covered by another base station a

predetermined distance away. No central code management resource is needed because the base station with the same orthogonal codes is located sufficient distance so that interference does not occur. As the mobile user travels throughout the service area, frequency switching must occur often as the user travels into the range of another base station. Frequency switching may cause inconvenience such as discontinuity during switching time. Also, the additional signaling required for frequency switching adds to higher overhead in the system.

It would therefore be desirable to provide a CDMA management scheme that reduces the amount of switching of users between the various orthogonal codes.

Summary Of The Invention

It is therefore one object of the invention to provide an improved CDMA system that allows minimal switching of CDMA codes over a service area.

In one aspect of the invention, a method for operating a communication system comprises the steps of:

- assigning a first code to a first beam of a mobile user;
- assigning the first code to a second beam of a user;
- moving the first beam with the mobile user;
- continually determining whether an interference occurs between the first beam and the second beam;
- when an interference occurs, reassigning a second code to the first beam.

In a further aspect of the invention, a communications system has a first mobile user device and a second user device. A high altitude communications device is in communication with the first mobile user device and the second user device. The high altitude communications device assigns a first beam having a first code to the first mobile user and assigns a second beam having the first code to the second user. The device continually determines whether an interference occurs between the first beam and the second beam and, when an interference occurs, reassigns a second code to the first beam.

One advantage of the invention is that the complexity of the overall system is reduced and thereby the overall system cost is reduced. By reducing the complexity the weight of the payload for the high altitude communications device is also reduced.

Other objects and features of the present invention will become apparent when viewed in light of the detailed description of the preferred embodiment when taken in conjunction with the attached drawings and appended claims.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 is a system diagram of a preferred embodiment in the invention.

Figure 2A is a octagonal approximation of a circle representing the Euclidean distance between two points.

Figure 2B is a polygonal approximation of an ellipse.

Figure 3 is a flow chart illustrating the preferred method of operating the present invention.

Figure 4 is a plot illustrating a first code assignment of the present invention.

Figure 5 is a plot of a second code assignment according to the present invention.

5 Figure 6 is a plot of a third code assignment according to the present invention.

Figure 7 is a plot showing the combination of a four code assignment system.

Best Modes For Carrying Out The Invention

In the following figures the same reference numerals are used to
10 identify the same components in the various views.

The present invention is applicable to many communications systems including various mobile, fixed, point-to-point broadcast and other types of communications.

Referring now to Figure 1, a communications system 10 is used
15 to cover a predetermined service area 12 on the earth's surface. A plurality of user terminals 14M and 14F are used to illustrate mobile users and fixed users respectively. Mobile user terminals 14M may comprise but are not limited to automotive applications, personal digital assistant applications, and cellular phone applications. Fixed user terminals 14F may, for example, comprise
20 business based or home based communications systems. Each user terminal 14F, 14M may receive a signal with a predetermined signal strength or receive an antenna radiation spot in a spot beam pattern that is available from and provided by high altitude communications device 16.

Communications system 10 further includes a gateway station 18 that is coupled to terrestrial networks 20 and a device operations center 22. Both gateway station 18 and device operations center 22 are in communication with high altitude communications device 16. Gateway station 18 provides a link between user terminals 14F, 14M and terrestrial networks 20 through high altitude communications device 16. Device operations center 22 provides command and control functions to communications device 16. Although illustrated as two separate units, gateway station 18 and device operations center 22 may be combined into the same physical location.

High altitude communications device 16 may, for example, be a low earth orbit (LEO), middle earth orbit (MEO) satellite or a geostationary orbit (GEO) satellite. Also, communications device 16 may also comprise a stratosphere-based platform. A stratospheric platform is preferably an unmanned vehicle that can fly for several months at an altitude of about 60,000 feet above the earth in small circles. The stratospheric platform 16 has numerous advantages including that capacity can be concentrated over a populated area, transmission delays associated with geostationary satellites are significantly reduced, the power for transmitting and receiving is substantially smaller than satellites, and the elevations angles of the system are high. The stratospheric platforms may also deploy relatively rapidly compared to satellites and thus, if the need increases, the system capability may be increased or modified. If the device is a stratospheric platform, the device operation center 22 may control the platform to fly in a small radius flight path over a given spot on the earth. Device operations center 22 may also provide replacement of parts and platforms for system 10.

The platform 16 is used as a communications node for gateway station 18 and user terminals 14M and 14F, each of which have antennas that are pointed in the direction of the platform. The gateway antenna 24 of gateway station 18 and user terminal antennas 26 has a beam width wide enough to maintain communication links with platform 16 throughout the flight path. In

the case of a medium earth orbit and low earth orbit satellite, antennas 24,26 may be electronically steered. The antennas 24,26 allow for large data throughput.

High altitude communications device 16 has a controller 28 that
 5 is used to control communications with the user terminals 14F,14M. In the present invention, the controller 28 is used to generate a plurality of beams in a code division multiple access system. In a code division multiple access system, each beam is assigned an orthogonal code. Various numbers of users may communicate within a beam. Typically, a predetermined number of codes
 10 are used over the service area. As will be further described below, the beams are assigned codes that do not interfere with adjacent beams. Upon the detection of an interference, the code may be switched for a particular beam and thus for a particular user. In the following description, the code referred to is an orthogonal code. However, various groups of orthogonal codes may be
 15 classified together as a single code for the purposes of the following description.

Referring now to Figure 2A, a beam 30 is shown as approximately circular in area. Beam 30 may be approximated, for example, by an octagon 32 for interference purposes. The beam 30 has an outer boundary defined where an interference level is tolerable. For example, the beam 20 may
 20 be approximated at the 20-dB side load contour. The interference contours may be of different shape and size throughout the coverage area. This is a result of maximizing the resource utilization instead of equalizing the beam size and shape. If a second beam has a center beyond the beam 30 or an octagonal approximation 32, then no interference is present. An interference is present
 25 when the center of another beam is within beam 30 or the approximation of octagon 32. The present invention is particularly suitable for mobile applications and therefore the beams move with the users and continual interference checking must be performed.

Referring now to Figure 2B, a beam 30 is illustrated with a polygonal approximation 34. As mentioned above, the beam 30 may be a variety of shapes depending on the particular system requirements. However, adjacent users should be outside the polygonal approximation 34 to prevent interference.

Referring now to Figure 3, a method 36 for operating the present invention according to a co-division multiple access system is illustrated. As illustrated for simplicity, four code bins 38A-38D are illustrated. The various numbers of users in the system in each code bin are illustrated as well. For example, in bin 38A, 8 users are present, in bin 38B, 10 users are present, in bin 38C, 25 users are present, and in bin 38D, 40 users are present. When a new user comes into the system in step 40, step 42 checks to determine whether there are any empty code bins. If there are empty code bins in step 42, the new user is assigned a code within the empty bin in step 44. In step 46, the code bins are sorted with the number of users in ascending order as illustrated by bins 38A-38D.

Referring back to step 42, if there are no code bins empty, step 48 is executed. In step 48, the position of the user relative to the other code groupings are determined. That is, preferably, the bin 38 with the lowest number of users is selected. The position of the user relative to the other code users in the first bin are determined and an interference contour is developed. If an interference is found, then step 52 is executed in which the code bin with the second lowest number of users is checked to determine whether there is an interference between the location of the second user and the other users of the second code. In step 54, if an interference is found in the second code, the codes are incremented until a suitable code is found. That is, if an interference is found in step 54, step 52 is re-executed until a suitable code is found.

If in step 50 or 54 no interference is found, then the user is assigned a code in step 56. The bins are then resorted in step 46 to an ascending order for further interference determinations. After step 56, step 58 is executed that provides a continual interference check for all users. Because the system is suitable for mobile applications, the users are continually moving and thus continual checks are necessary to prevent interference between the codes as the movers move about the service area 12. In step 58, if an interference is not found between a mobile user and other users, then step 58 is continually executed.

10 If in step 58 interference is found between the mobile user and other users, then steps 42 *et seq.* are executed as described above so that the user may be reassigned another code that does not interfere with other users.

Thus, in the present invention, the user is assigned a code and the beam moves with the user until the user interferes with another user with the same code. Thus, another code is assigned to the beam corresponding with the user.

Referring now to Figure 4, a plurality of users 62 are illustrated with a corresponding beam 63. Although the beams 63 overlap, the beams do not incorporate another user and thus the orthogonal code assignment for the beams 63 do not interfere.

Figure 4 also illustrates that the size of the beam may vary. As those skilled in the art would recognize, the beam pattern may also be referred to as a "color." Thus, Figure 4 illustrates a single color of code assignments. As mentioned above, beams 63 may also represent a plurality of codes rather than a single code.

Referring now to Figure 5, a plurality of users 64 having corresponding beam 65 is illustrated in a non-interfering manner. Figure 5 thus illustrates a second color.

Referring now to Figure 6, a third set of users 66 is illustrated with corresponding beams 67. Thus, Figure 6 illustrates a third color of a multi-color system.

Figure 7 illustrates a system illustrating the combination of the various users over the service area 12. Figure 7 is merely illustrative of a potential snapshot of the present invention. Because the system is designed for mobile users, the various positions of the users changes over time.

Advantageously, the present invention provides a system that allows the user to maintain a code assignment until the code assignment interferes with another user. Thus, the controller 28 on the high altitude communications device 16 may be reduced in size and complexity. This type of configuration is particularly suitable for high altitude communications devices such as satellites or stratospheric platforms. Also, only four code assignments have been illustrated. However, those skilled in the art will recognize more or a greater number of code assignments may be used. Thus, no predefined cells are present in the present invention.

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While particular embodiments of the invention have been shown and described, numerous variations alternate embodiments will occur to those skilled in the art. Accordingly, it is intended that the invention be limited only in terms of the appended claims.